

Professional Dress

From Corps to Careers

We encourage you to put some thought into your professional dress wardrobe for interviews, internships, and the workplace. It's no secret that people make quick impressions and judgements about you based on your appearance. Proper professional dress establishes credibility and builds trust. Here are some research statistics to keep in mind as you plan your outfits:

- Research from Princeton University indicates that individuals wearing formal attire are *perceived as more competent*. These judgments occur rapidly, often within a second. (Read Research Paper: <https://spia.princeton.edu/news/split-second-clothes-make-man-more-competent-eyes-others?utm>)
- 65% of hiring managers said that clothes could be *the deciding factor* between two similar candidates.

Understanding Dress Codes

Each industry has its own style guidelines. It's best practice to research what dress is expected at your company or organization because standards will vary based on company culture.

- Business Casual - includes khaki or cotton pants, skirts (not too short or too tight), sweaters, cardigans, polo shirts, and leather or loafer shoes.
- Business Professional - includes suits for men and women with closed-toe dress shoes, simple ties, and matching accessories of shoes, belt, and socks.

Wardrobe Essentials for Men and Women:

Tailored suit in navy, charcoal, or grey.

Crisp light blue and white dress shirts or blouses.

Neutral-colored, polished, comfortable dress shoes.

Conservative ties and accessories.



Focus on the Details

- Tailoring – fit is key. Utilize the tailor shop to ensure your garments fit properly.
- Color palettes – navy, charcoal, and grey suits are the most popular colors in an office setting. Full black suits are most utilized for memorial and funeral services.
- Accessories—Simple socks, belts, and comfortable dress shoes should match in color. Ties should be simple and match the lapel width of your suit. The four-in-hand tie knot is suitable for most day-to-day office wear. When deciding to add pocket squares, cuff links, or tie clips, consider the company culture. Women should keep jewelry and nails simple.

Avoid Rookie Mistakes

1. Ill-fitting clothing – ensure you purchase clothes that fit your measurements and if possible, get them tailored.
2. Over-accessorizing – when it comes to accessories, sometimes less is more and less distracting. Avoid bold ties, large jewelry, or flashy watches.
3. Inappropriate footwear – ensure your footwear is comfortable and professional without marks. We don't advise women to wear heels that are over three inches tall, uncomfortable, or newly purchased.
4. Lack of ironing – prioritize ironing your clothing to demonstrate care and effort.

Cost-Effective Dressing

- Build a capsule wardrobe by always purchasing suits and garments made of the same materials (example: 80% wool / 20% polyester) to create interchangeable looks.
- Shop at thrift stores for high-end clothes that could be tailored to fit you.
- Utilize sales at outlet stores for staple garments.
- Visit the Citadel Career Center's Clothes Closet for free items.

Additional Resources

Men's Tailoring - <https://theartefact.com/how-a-suit-should-fit/>

Women's Tailoring - <https://corporette.com/shop-page/shopping-guides/guide-to-basic-womens-suining/>

Make a Citadel Career Center Appointment! Or attend our Drop-In Hours: Mondays-Thursdays from 1-4 p.m. at 203 Richardson Avenue.

